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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

COMMITTEE ON DOCUMENTATION

TASK TEAM III - FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS

WORKING GROUP ON TRANSLITERATION

Minutes of the Fifth Meeting, 12 May 1965

Members or Their Representatives Present

25X1 CIA [ ] Chairman  
NSA [ ]  
ARMY - Mr. Henry Holz  
NAVY - Mr. D. E. Ashworth  
AIR FORCE - Mr. Wieslaw Arlet  
25X1 CSS - [ ] Secretary

Others Present

25X1 [ ]

25X1 1. [ ] introduced [ ] from CIA's Office of  
Computer Services. Minutes of the fourth meeting were approved with  
the addition of Mr. D. E. Ashworth's name to the list of those in  
attendance. 25X1

25X1 2. [ ] noted that this was the fifth meeting and he hoped  
we would be able to crystallize our ideas on standardization of trans-  
literation systems with one or two more meetings. He commented that  
25X1 [ ] paper on a new standard for transliteration was a product  
of much effort over a long period of time. It warrants serious  
consideration of the group. Discussion of [ ] paper ensued. 25X1

3. Mr. Ashworth referred to a place name in Lithuania and asked if  
the system would use the Lithuanian or the Russian version. [ ] 25X1  
indicated that the Russian version was what was usually encountered in  
his environment. Mr. Ashworth described a set of special characters  
he had developed for Cyrillic to Roman transliteration which retained  
maximum phonetic value while providing one-for-one character correspondence.

GROUP I  
Excluded from automatic  
downgrading and  
declassification.

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Mr. Ashworth proposed two distinctive variations of the Roman "Y" as special characters. Additionally, Mr. Ashworth would combine the \$¢ available on standard typewriter keyboards to represent the cyrillic character represented by SHCH in the BGN system. [ ] noted that both his scheme and the one proposed by Mr. Ashworth called for development and use of special slugs to provide requisite one-for-one character correspondence.

25X1

4. [ ] discussed the absolute necessity of one-for-one character correspondence for machine processing of transliterations. He mentioned recent hardware developments which expand the number of special characters which are available in computer system printers, i.e., up to 256 codes available. In this mode, the user selects the font in which he desires the output and a buffer device makes the necessary selection from available characters. [ ] noted that certain telecommunication devices have extremely limited fonts which would not be able to provide necessary special characters or to conform to the requirements of the proposed system.

25X1

5. [ ] brought up the fact that the proposed system uses Roman "T" and "S" as well as "Ts" and also used a "Y" and "A" and a "U" as well as a "Ya" and a "Yu" in transliterating Cyrillic characters. He felt that this actually retained ambiguities rather than removing them. [ ] stressed that use of the lower case "s" in conjunction with the "T" and lower case "a" and "u" in conjunction with the "Y" made these transliterations distinct from the Cyrillic characters transliterated "T" and "S" and "Y", "U" and "A". [ ] felt that a truly unambiguous transliteration system should not use the "Ts" or "Ya", "Yu", combinations. [ ] suggested that [ ] propose how this might be done. [ ] mentioned as possibilities "Th" for "Ts", and use of "Yh", "Yv" and "Yw". It was noted that phonetic equivalence would be sacrificed by this technique of transliteration. [ ] felt that this might create less problems than multiple use of the Roman characters.

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6. Mr. Arlet stated that transliteration was only a part of the placename problem. He noted that the identification of a place and assigning it an official name as is done by the Board of Geographic Names occurs before and is much broader than the transliteration problem. [ ] agreed that identification and selecting place names are complex problems, however, they should not divert us from our assignment, i.e., to determine if, after a place has been identified and given an official name, it should be transliterated in the same way by USIB agencies.

7. Discussion then turned to requirements for an unambiguous transliteration system as determined by discussions working group members had had with their respective agency personnel. [ ] CIA, reported that there appeared to be no hard requirement for an unambiguous system by user activities outside the machine environment. However, management recognized the increasing role which will be played by data processing equipment and thus favored an unambiguous transliteration system which would make the support possible.

25X1

8. Mr. Holz, Army, reported that there appeared to be no problem in using ambiguous transliteration outside the machine environment. However, he noted trends indicating greater use of computers which would

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require unambiguous transliteration.

9. Mr. Ashworth, Navy, requested the Secretary to read into the record portions of a letter from Mr. Koines as follows:

1. Transliteration presents no difficulty at all to the users of foreign language (primarily Russian, some Chinese) materials. The analysts are able to adapt to the system of transliteration being used; when they have a problem, they turn to the ONI Translation Section for assistance.

2. The Navy Scientific and Technical Intelligence Center (STIC) is in the advanced planning stage of converting its scientific and technical information files to punched cards. There is no target date for completion of the conversion. STIC then expects to put its information on tapes in the likewise indefinite, and more remote, future. Cognizant STIC personnel agree, however, that a transliteration system for use in a computer must be unambiguous and standardized, with a view to possible exchanges of data between agencies. They express no special preference of data for any transliteration system for daily use, as long as it is pronounceable.

3. Part of the Maritime Intelligence Branch has data on merchant ships and ship movements on tape. The spelling (Transliteration) of the ship name is only one of the three parameters used in identifying ships; consequently, transliteration poses no appreciable problem to that Branch.

10. Mr. Arlet representing the Air Force reiterated his position that transliteration was only a portion of the larger more complex problem of identifying and officially naming places.

25X1 11. [ ] then recapitulated the findings as follows: An unambiguous system of transliteration is required where the exchange of machine files is involved or where information may enter a machine system. Mr. Arlet proposed the following addition: "Identification being the number one Air Force requirement with respect to geographic names, independent of any transliteration system, the BGN system satisfies this requirement". [ ] suggested a clarifying phrase after "... BGN system" in Mr. Arlet's statement as follows: [of identifying and officially naming places]. Mr. Holz then proposed that the following be added to the main statement: "It is further recommended that any unambiguous transliteration system adopted by this committee for machine use be made mandatory or binding for all members of the Intelligence Community so as to effect the ready and efficient transfer of tapes, cards, and other reproducing media and thereby preclude the developing of a multiplicity of systems which characterize the present confused state."

25X1 12. [ ] indicated that these statements would be used in an attempt to come up with a tentative proposal for our report to CODIB.

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25X1 This tentative proposal will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting. [ ] suggested that recommendations when approved by USIB be made known to the American Standards Association.

13. The next meeting will be held 1000 hours, 16 June 1965 in Room 2E45, CIA Headquarters.

[ ]

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Secretary

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